

Pragya Yoga
for
Healthy & Happy Life

English Translation of
“*Pragyā Abhiyāna Kā Yoga Vyāyāma*”
by
Brahmvarchas

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Publisher :

Shri Vedmata Gayatri Trust,
Shantikunj, Haridwar,
Uttarakhanda 249 411
India

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visit us : www.awgp.org

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Ph. 91-(0)1334-260602/261955

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First Edition : 2007

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ISBN : 81-8255-027-0

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Price: Rs. 13.00

Preface

Our sagacious ancestors of the Vedic Age had gifted us with precious heritage of the yoga-science of well-being. However, with changing civilizations and attitudes towards life, in the course of time, people largely became materialistic and ignored the ancient sciences. Subsequent single-tracked commercialized civilization and inclination towards bodily comforts and sensual pressures has raised several problems in the present times. One is so busy making money and seeking more and more comforts that one tends to neglect the fact that the mind-body system is also like a machine, which needs careful maintenance and 're-charging' of its components and power units. As a result, one is facing unprecedented threats and challenges on the health front. Preventive measures and augmentation of stamina and resistance are crucial if one wants to sustain a healthy and hearty life. Revival of sound practice of yoga therefore assumes greater relevance and importance today than ever before. This book introduces the real meaning and scope of yoga and presents a new method of practising it for strengthening and rejuvenation of body and mind. The method named "Pragya Yoga" is fast and feasible, yet, comprehensive-in-effect. It can be practised by people of all age groups without any cost or time constraints.

— Dr. Pranav Pandya, MD

Adept Approach to Yoga

1

Healthy and happy life is the most sought of goal of every one. Whatever be one's socio economic status and occupation, one always aspires to have healthy and joyful life. But one should also remember that vigor and happiness are interwoven with physical, mental and emotional well-being. Those who give importance only to physical fitness cannot sustain good health unless they are mentally and emotionally fine. This is fact emphasized in the ancient Indian texts and is reflected in the holistic way of life guided there. The modern science of medicine has also recognized the importance of mental and emotional fitness in healthy and hearty life and therefore the causes and remedies of many diseases and disorders are searched in the patient's psychology these days.

The Indian sages of Vedic times - the *rishis*, had discovered the super science of yoga and thereby guided practical ways for accomplishing complete well-being. The *rishis* had devised methods to awaken the unlimited powers (potentials) of human life by means of yoga. The experimental science of yoga, as developed by the revered *Rishi Patanjali* is known as "Ashtang Yoga" (*Asṭāṅga Yoga*). Though *yoga* has become a familiar term across the globe and plethora of so called *yoga*-schools are flourishing these days, people at large are ignorant of the real meaning and purpose of *yoga*. They regard it as a 'package' of physical exercises alone. No doubt, the physical exercises (*āsanas*) derived from the Ashtang Yoga are most natural and effective means of physical fitness but its domain is not confined

to these. In fact, it encompasses all aspects of life. What makes the real difference and bestows great benefits is to practise the *āsanas* along with understanding the basic philosophy of yoga while also attempting to adopt it in action.

The word meaning of yoga is – union, addition. It has originated in spiritual context and implies – the union of individual self with the Absolute, Eternal Self. In simple terms, the philosophy of yoga teaches us that a life when lived as per the will and disciplines of the Supreme Creator becomes a life united with His Supreme Powers. The Ashtang Yoga has eight (*ashta*) components (*ang*) sincere adoption of which accomplishes health, vigor and joy in life and leads to its divine evolution. These components are termed — *Yam, Niyam, Āsana, Prāṇāyāma, Pratyāhāra, Dhāraṇā, Dhyāna, Samādhi*. The first four have direct bearing upon physical and mental health. The later successively pertain to emotional transmutation and spiritual upliftment.

The seekers of ultimate ascent of happy and hearty life are required to successfully traverse the eight phases of Ashtang Yoga. The details of these with practical guidance can be found in comprehensive texts and commentaries on “Patanjali Yoga”. The book “*Patanjali Yoga Dasharna*” published by Shantikunj Hardwar, is especially suited for present-day readers. It is also recommended for beginners who want to have a thorough but lucid illustration on this discipline of deeper knowledge.

Those desirous of physical and mental health alone should also note that adoption of the disciplines of *Yam* and *Niyam* is a pre-requisite for most fruitful results of their endeavors of the physical and breathing exercises of *āsana* and *prāṇāyāma*.

The disciplines of *Yam* include – *satya* (truthfulness), *ahimsā* (non-violence), *brahmcharya* (chastity of body and mind), *asteya* (restrain from stealing or craving for others' belongings), *aparigraha* (austerity; avoidance of materialistic accumulation). *Niyam* incorporates – *śaucha* (purity and cleanliness of mind, body and surroundings), *tapa* (penance and self-discipline for self-refinement), *swādhyāya* (self-study and self-development in the light of elevated thoughts), *santosa* (contentment), *iśawara-praṇidhāna* (devotion to divinity). Neglect of *Yam-Niyam* and adoption of a conduct contrary to these triggers untoward accumulation in the inner spirit and gives rise to hidden psychological complexities. This negative development hampers health and happiness in several ways and results in acute problems in the long run.

The importance of disciplined routine and righteous conduct for vigor and vitality is also highlighted in the Holy Gita (Chapt. 6, Shloka 17):

Yuktāhāravihārasya Yuktacheṣṭasya Karmasu |

Yuktaswapnāvabodhasya Yogo Bhavati Duḥkhahā ||

Meaning: Adoption of – *āhāra* (air, water, food intakes), *vihāra* (chores esp. those pertaining to Nature's direct effects), *cheṣṭā* (determined attempts), and *karma* (actions), as prescribed in [the science of] *yoga* eliminates all pains and worries.

Āhāra, being the key source of nourishment and strength of the body, is given importance in health sciences. As per the ancient texts, the intrinsic natural property (*guna*) of the food exerts corresponding impression on the mind too. Therefore, the *yoga*-science gives prime attention to what and how one should eat. It prescribes *satoguṇī āhāra* (see Ayurveda and Yoga scriptures for details). In simple terms, fresh seasonal fruits and vegetables,

sprouted grains and easy to digest fresh-cooked food prepared from cereals and pulses naturally available in the present season are best if eaten without deep frying and sans spices and sweetening. Weather changes with season; the degree and nature of this variation depends upon the climate. *Vihāra* (lifestyle including clothing and timings of daily chores esp. the timings of food intake, stroll etc) should be adjusted as per the prevailing weather to minimize the negative effects of excess heat, cold or rains etc and maximize the benefits, e.g. walk on fresh dew in spring, exposure to the mild sunlight in winter, etc.

Cheṣṭā and *karma* should be aimed at benevolent goals and should be attempted using wisdom. Even the daily practice of physical exercises should be done with due punctuality, alacrity and thoroughness. For example, one should not take a shortcut to practising some shoulder-exercises while walking. Sleeping and waking up are also important actions. There should be good balance of rest and mental and physical activity every day. While going to bed one should let his mind free of all tensions and feel as though it's the end of one life. The next day would bring new life, which should begin with new hope and determination. One should wake up with new energy and light and plan for better management of the day ahead. The resolutions for the day should be doable and must incorporate improvement in some respect so that the mistakes of the past are not recurred and the thoughts and actions today are modified.

Well-being of the masses and dissemination of divine cultural values along with social development are principal objectives of the *Yug Nirman* Mission of the All World Gayatri Pariwar. Its multi-faceted reformatory and reconstructive activities are initiated by revered Pandit Shri Ram Sharma Acharya, a seer-

sage of the present age who pioneered spirituality as an art of living, and propounded thought-revolution and revival of the Rishi Culture in new scientific light.

As a first step towards uplifting the physical and mental health of the masses, he had presented a stream of yoga, which is simple and suitable for the masses today. This is referred as “Pragya Yoga”. Shantikunj – an *Aranyak* of our times, which is situated in the lap of the Holy Ganges and under the pristine shadows of the Himalayas – is a center for training of Pragya Yoga.

This yoga aims for healthy tuning of all the three bodies (physical, subtle and causal) of a person. The *āsanas* rejuvenate the physical body and *prāṇāyāmas* (breath control exercises) elevate bio-energy and help cleansing and calming the mind, and chanting of *mantra* in the heart helps augment inner strength. Pragya Yoga is a combination of all three incorporating selected *āsanas* and *prāṇāyāmas* with chants of *mantras*.

Several of the sagacious writings of Acharya ji offer lucid guidance on how to adopt Yam Niyam in today's life. Comprehensive personality development and spiritual refinement courses and *sadhana* camps organized at Shantikunj Hardwar on regular basis provide the necessary support, inspiration and practical training. (See last section of Chapter 8 for necessary information).

This small book introduces the *āsanas* and *prāṇāyāms* incorporated in Pragya Yoga.



Importance of Physical Exercises

I 2

A disciplined life-style with incorporation of regular physical exercises is as essential for good physical health as a balanced nourishing diet. Those who live a comfortable life with abundance of healthy and tasty food and resources of pleasure are seen suffering from many kinds of weaknesses and ailments of the body if they do not exert adequate physical labor.

Our body is like a huge factory in which several processes of production, supply, distribution and consumption of vital elements continue all the time. There is also an accumulation of wastes and byproducts of its internal reactions and of external pollutants and invading organisms and chemicals. There also take place damages and destructions, rectification of which requires extra support in addition to the natural physiological, cellular and molecular mechanisms. Physical exercises help cleansing of the dirt and toxics deposited in various forms and energizing all components of the body, appropriating blood-circulation and supply of vital elements to different organs. The defense and repair mechanism of the body are also strengthened by specific physical exercises.

People often get confused as to which physical exercises are best? So many techniques, schools and teachers are there these days that at times it appears to have become a fashionable profession! Good number of aerobics clubs, gyms and yoga centres are there in metro cities. Swimming pools and joggers' parks also available there, as jogging, brisk walks and swimming provide whole-body exercise in normal case. But

most of these usually charge fat fees for membership and could be attended only in allocated time-slots. So only the financially well offs can afford these. But even among them, those having irregular work schedules and busy routines often find it difficult to manage the distances and fixed time-schedules of such courses. The middle and lower economic classes and those living in smaller towns are deprived of such facilities. Though open space is available in the small towns and villages, usually there is practically no suitably smooth and clean track there for refreshing walk/jog. Then what should most people do for physical fitness?

The generous attempts of some yoga-gurus is certainly of great help that they allow live telecast of their mass-camps so that, one can save the cost of physically attending their camps and yet learn the yoga-exercises taught by them. However, this also has several limitations – people may not have televisions, or access to carefully watch the telecast of such sessions regularly due to problems of electricity power-cuts and/or pressure of others around them to watch some other programmes/TV-channels at that time. Moreover it is risky too, as one would not get an opportunity of live training in the presence of an expert teachers, who can guide on intricacies of practising specific *āsanas*, as per one's physical health and in view of the constraints of one's weaknesses/ailments, if any. Same is true of the standard yoga books. They describe so many *āsanas* and *prāṇāyāms* practising all of which is not possible for most people in today's life-style because of time constraints, as not only the number of commonly taught *āsanas* is large, but also due to the fact that many of these require relaxation (*sīthilīkaraṇa*) in-between or between two *āsanas*. (Practising arbitrarily selected *āsanas* in random order of sequence might lead to negative effects. For example if one practises only some forward bending *āsanas* to get rid of his tummy or to slim his/her waste, he/she may suffer problems like spondylitis after few weeks or months...).

Keeping the above-mentioned constraints and practical difficulties in mind and considering the common causes of health hazards these days, Gurudev Pandit Shriram Sharma Acharya had formulated the Pragya Yoga which incorporates only few *yoga-āsanas* and *kriyās* that are easy to practise in feasible time and space and which are very effective as preventive measures, and as means of regaining or sustaining physical fitness in present times.

These include the essential and harmless exercises of *pawan muktāsanas* that strengthen the muscles and bone-joints and give them desired flexibility.



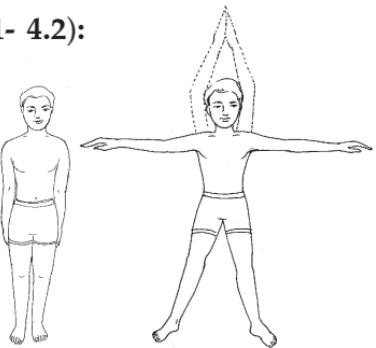
Conditioning Exercises for People of All Age-Groups

3

Before starting any yoga, one needs to warm up the body and eliminate the stiffness of the muscles. "Gati Yoga and Anga mardan" are best for this purpose.

3.1 Gati Yoga (See Figures Nos. 4.1- 4.2):

Step (i): Standing at one place, move your legs and hands as though you are running without shifting from that place. (Do it for 2 - 5 minutes.)



Step (ii): Slowly jump on the toes without shifting from the place you were standing.

Figures Nos. 4.1- 4.2

Step (iii): Stand straight for few seconds. Then jump up slightly and spread both the legs (distance between the feet should be about 10-12 inches). Then spread both the arms sideways, keep them straight at the level of the shoulders. After few seconds, bring the hands back to normal position, jump and join the legs to stand in the posture of 'attention'. Repeat this cycle 5 - 8 times.

Step (iv): Stand straight for few seconds. Then jump up slightly and spread both the legs as in the step-(iii) while taking the arms straight upwards; make a clap with the hands in this posture and come back to normal attention posture with a jump. Repeat this cycle 5 - 8 times.

Step (v): Stand straight for few seconds. Then jump up slightly and spread both the legs as in the above steps and spread the arms in front straight at the level of shoulders. After about half-a-minute, take the arms straight upwards; make a clap in this posture and come back to normal ‘attention’ posture with a jump. Repeat this cycle 5 - 8 times.

You would feel charged-up now. Rub your hands upon each other for few seconds then place the palms on the eyes. After a minute, gently massage the forehead, head, face and neck by hands. Also massage the both the arms and legs.

Now stand quietly to relax and let the breathing normalize. Proceed for next set of exercises after 2 to 5 minutes.

3.2 Pawan Muktāsanas:

Although the metabolic functions continue to activate our nerves and body tissues, the muscles often become stiff in the absence of adequate mechanical exercise of contraction and expansion. Exercises like the *pawan muktāsanas* are essential to normalize their flexibility. Regular practice of these *āsanas* together with prescribed dietary constraints helps to balance the three *doshas* – *vat*, *pitt* and *kaph*, imbalance of which is considered in Ayurveda (the ancient Indian Medical Science^[1, 2]) as the root cause of most diseases and disorders. Specific movements of the joints effectuated in the practice of *pawan muktāsanas* release the untoward gases, if any, stuck there and thus make the joints and limbs free for natural movements.

In today’s comfort-driven lifestyle, practice of *pawan muktāsanas*^[3, 4] are crucial for allaying the *vat* related problems of joint-pains (rheumatism), sitica etc and minimizing the common professional hazards like spondylitis, acidity, etc. Healthy bones are essential for a healthy body. Balanced intake of nutritious food and adoption of adequate exercises are needed

for their healthy development. The following *pawan muktāsanas* are very useful in removing undue pressure and friction between the joints and thereby making the bones and muscles flexible and strong. Even 20 - 30 minutes of this particular *yoga* exercise every day can keep us fit and dynamic. Doing these *āsanas* amounts to gentle stretching and massaging of the spinal cord, which induces soothing effects on the nervous system and endocrine glands as well.

3.2.0 Initial Posture: Sit in a relaxed posture with erect spinal cord, neck and head straight and legs outstretched. Place the palms of the hand on the floor (planer base on which you are sitting) almost behind the buttocks; the elbows should be straightened. Lean backwards taking support of the arms. Close the eyes and relax for few minutes. See Figure 3.0)

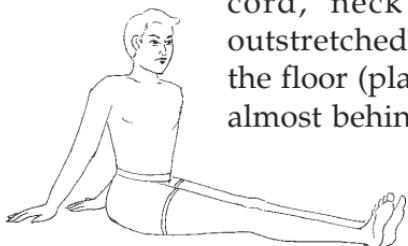


Figure 3.0

3.2.1 For Toes: Sit in the above-described initial posture. Pay attention on your toes. Slowly move the toes of the both the feet backward and forward. The ankles should be kept naturally relaxed and stationary. Only the toes should move. Be attentive of your breaths. Inhale while the toes move backward and exhale as they move forward. (See Figure 3.1). Repeat it 5 to 10 times.

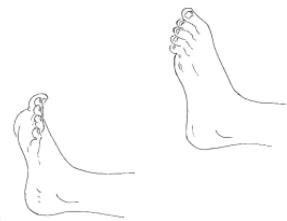


Figure 3.1

3.2.2 For Ankles: Be seated in the Initial Posture described in 3.2.0. Slowly move the feet backward and forward by bending only near the ankles. Legs should remain outstretched and the knees should not bend. Heels should also remain stationary and touching the floor. (See Figure 3.2). Inhale during backward



Figure 3.2

movement and exhale during forward. Repeat it 5 to 10 times.



Figure 3.3

3.2.3 For Heels: While sitting in the initial posture. Join both the legs so that the ankles and thumbs touch each other. Now slowly rotate both the feet (without lifting the heels from the ground/base and without bending the knees) first clockwise then anticlockwise. Inhale during the clockwise rotation and exhale during anticlockwise. (See Figure 3.3).

Repeat it 5 to 10 times.



Figure 3.4

3.2.4 For Feet: Sit in the 'initial posture' with a gap of few inches (say about 4 to 6 inches) between the legs. Slowly rotate the right feet (heels should be on the base, knees should not bend) first in the clockwise then anticlockwise direction. (See Figure 3.4). Inhale during clockwise and exhale during anticlockwise rotation. Do so 3 to 5 times. Repeat the exercise with the left feet.

3.2.5 For Knees: Relax in the initial posture. Now slowly lift the right leg slightly and bend its knee so that the thigh reaches the chest and heel almost touches the buttock. (The left leg should remain straight and on the floor). Hold the right thigh by interlocking the hands under it. (Remember, as in the earlier exercises of this sequence of *pawan muktāsanās*, the back, neck and head should remain straight). Wait in this position for a second. Now slowly straighten this leg, keep it straight slightly above the floor for a second then place it back on the floor (See Figure 3.5). Again lift it up and repeat the sequence of bending and straightening 3 to 5 times. In each cycle, inhale while bending and exhale while straightening. Do the same exercise with the left leg.

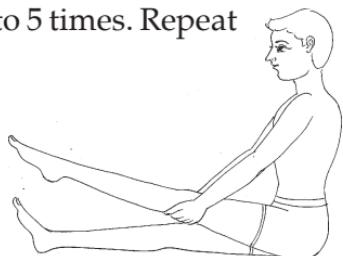
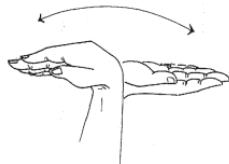


Figure 3.5



Figure 3.6

3.2.6 For Waist: Sit with back, neck and head straight. Outstretch the legs on the base (floor) and keep them apart as much as you can do easily without bending the knees. Now straighten your arms on the sides and twist your waist to touch the big toe of left foot with the right hand. Keep the left arm straight towards the back. Both the arms should be stretched in a straight line. Turn the head towards the left and stare the left hand for few seconds. (Knees and elbows should not bend; See Figure 3.6 for illustration). Now slowly twist in the opposite direction to touch the big toe of the right foot by the left hand. Stretch the right arm towards the back so that both the arms are again in straight line. Turn the head right and stare at the right hand for few seconds. This completes one round. Try to complete 3 to 5 rounds.



3.2.7 For the Fingers: Sit in *sukhasana* (erect back and cross-legged posture) or in the 'initial posture' described in 3.2.0 above. Straighten both the arms in front at shoulder level. Open the hands and stretch the fingers keeping as much gap between them as possible. After few seconds, close the fist with thumbs inside for couple of seconds. Then open the fists and again stretch the fingers... Repeat 5 to 7 times.

3.2.8 For Wrists: Remain in the sitting posture as in 3.2.7 above. Straighten the arms in front at shoulder level. Close the fists with thumbs inside. Rotate the wrist clockwise then anti-clockwise for 5 to 7 times. (See Figure 3.7).

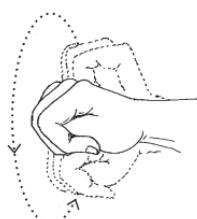


Figure 3.7

Then open the palms and keep the fingers straightened without any gap in between. Bend the hands from the wrist as though you are pressing by the palms a (hypothetical) wall in front of

you. Fingers should point upwards. After few seconds, bend the hand downwards from the wrist so that the palms face your body and fingers point downwards. (See Figure 3.8). Retain this position for few seconds. Again bend the hands upwards and repeat for 5 to 7 times.

(Remember not to bend your elbows or neck throughout this practice! Also, take care that fingers or knuckle joints do not bend).

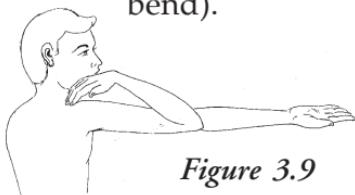


Figure 3.9

3.2.9 For Elbows: Remain in the sitting posture as in 3.2.7 above. Straighten the arms in front at shoulder level. Keep the palms open

and facing up. Bend the arms at the elbows and touch the fingers to the shoulders. Straighten the arms after few seconds. Repeat bending and straightening for 5 to 7 times. (See Figure 3.9).

Now straighten the arms sideways at shoulder level with hands open and palms facing up. Bend the arms at the elbows and touch the fingers to the shoulders. Again straighten the arms sideways. Repeat bending and straightening for 5 to 7 times.

3.2.10 For Shoulders: Remain in the sitting posture as in 3.2.7 above. Throughout this exercise keep your head, neck and back straight. Keep the arms straight sideways at shoulder level. Bend the arms at elbows and touch the fingers to the shoulders. Now, without moving your body, stretch the right elbow forward as much as you can. (The left elbow would then move backwards). Return back to normal position after few seconds. Repeat with left elbow moving forward. This completes one round. Do 3 to 5 such rounds.



Figure 3.10

Come back to the original position. Then keep the arms sideways, bend the elbows to put the fingers of the left hand on left shoulder and right on the right. Slowly rotate both the elbows simultaneously to complete a full circle in clockwise direction. Do so 5 to 7 times. Then repeat same number of times with full circular rotation in the anti-clockwise direction. (Illustrations in Figure 3.10.)

3.2.11 For Chest: Take a deep breath to fill the lungs to maximum capacity. (This way your chest will be naturally stretched). Hold for a second then slowly exhale, wait for few seconds. Again take the deep breath... Repeat this cycle 5 to 7 times. (Placing the hands on the waist from the sides lends good support in this exercise.)

3.2.12 For Neck: The neck is directly connected to all the nerves. Below the brain, it is the neck through which all nerves pass. Its exercise is a must for everyone – esp. those working for long hours on the computers, writing desks or in the kitchen.

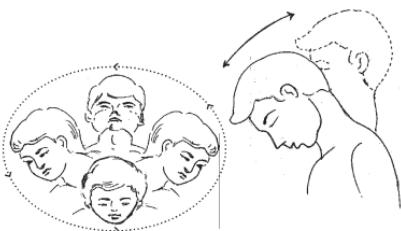


Figure 3.11

Sit in *vajrasana* or *sukhasana* with hands resting on the knees. Close the eyes. Slowly bend the head forward to make the chin touch as much near the lower edge of the neck (which is almost the beginning of the chest) as possible with ease. Now move the head backward as much as you can without straining. Bring it back in normal position. Repeat 3 to 5 times. (See Figure 3.11.)

Now slowly move the head to the right and bend it to attempt to make the right ear touch the right shoulder without lifting the shoulder. Bring the head back in normal position. Then bend it towards the left and try to touch the left ear to the left shoulder without lifting the latter. One round of side ways is complete this way. Practise 3 to 5 rounds.

Remain in the same posture with head upright in its normal position. Keep the eyes closed. Slowly rotate the head downwards, to the right, backward and then to the left side in a relaxed circular motion. Repeat 3 to 5 times with such a circular movement in the clockwise direction and 3 to 5 times in the anticlockwise. (See Figure 3.12.) Likewise other exercises, practise this one as well in a relaxed manner. Stop if there is any difficulty.

In any case, do not strain any part of the body. Bend the head/neck as much as possible without any pain, heaviness or giddiness.

Upon completion, rub the palms on each other vigorously till they warm up. Now place them gently on the closed eyes for few seconds. You may now open the eyes.



Figure 3.13

3.2.13 For Mouth: Open your mouth as wide as you can without any pain. Keep it open for few seconds, then close and relax in its normal state. Again open and so on. Repeat for 3 to 5 times. Then open the mouth and move the jaws from left to right and right to left 3 to 5 times. (Figure 3.13.)

3.2.14 For Teeth: Close the mouth so that the upper row of teeth stands right above the lower one in order — i.e. front upper teeth on the respective front lower teeth and so on. Slightly press the front side upper teeth on the front side lower teeth. Then do it for the sideways and backside teeth (including the jaws). Repeat each type 5 to 7 times. (Figure 3.14.) Needless to say that those wearing artificial denture or having toothache etc should not attempt this exercise.



Figure 3.14

3.2.15 For Eyes: (i) Rub the palms vigorously on each other till they become hot. Close the eyes and place the palms on eyelids for few seconds without applying any pressure. Repeat 3 - 5 times. This *palming* process gives soothing relaxation to the eyes. It may be done several times in a day.

For exercising the eye-muscles do the following exercises of movements of eyeballs.

(ii) Keep the eyes open look straight in the front. Blink the eyes quickly for 8 to 10 times. Now close the eyes and relax them for half a minute. Open the eyes again for the second round. Repeat this exercise 3 to 5 times.

(iii) Stand with erect back, neck and head. Focus your eyes on some point (small object) straight in the front. Stare continuously at the object without blinking the eyelids for few seconds then close the eyes. Repeat 3 to 5 times. Close and relax the eyes for two minutes and also do *palming* once.

(iv) Stand with your back, neck and head straight. (If you want to sit, keep the legs straight in the front). Straighten the right arms on the right side at the shoulder level with fingers folded in a fist and thumb standing up. The left arm should be kept straight with the hand (no fist) on the left knee or thigh. If you are not able to have a peripheral view of the right thumb without moving your head, move the right arm slightly towards your front. Now, move only the eyeballs to constantly glaze at the right thumbs while moving the arms slowly from the side up to the front without bending the elbows. Relax for few seconds.

Now slowly move the right arm from the front to the right side while the thumb is kept up. Continue glazing the thumb without moving the head. Repeat this exercise 3 to 5 times. (Figure 3.2.15a)

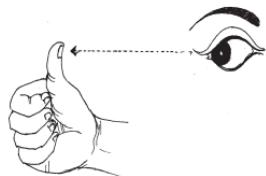


Figure 3.15

Close and relax the eyes for two minutes and also do *palming* once. Repeat with interchanged roles of the left and right hands.

The above exercise may also be repeated for circular motion. For this, first move straightened right arm from right to the front and then slowly move it in a circle (clockwise or anticlockwise, as found comfortable) without bending the elbow or the thumb. (Figure 3.2.15b). Do the same 3 to 5 times with a gap of few seconds after each round to close and relax the eyes. Repeat with interchanged roles of the arms.



3.2.16: For Tongue: Sit in *vajrāsana* (i.e. straight back, neck and head with legs folded inwardly so that the both the knees touch each other and the toes are beneath the buttocks) or *sukhasana* (i.e. straight back, neck and head with cross-legged posture). Outstretch the tongue as much as you can without any pain; pull it back after few seconds. Repeat this forward backward movement 5 to 7 times. Then draw the tongue out again and move it straight from left to right and right to left for 5 to 7 times. (Figure 3.16.)

Figure 3.16



3.2.17 For Cheeks: Inflate the cheeks as much as you can and keep them stretched for few seconds. Then release and relax in normal state. Again inflate. Repeat the process 5-7 times. . (Figure 3.17.)

Figure 3.17

3.2.18 For Ears: Pull the upper portion of the ears by hands in upward direction, lower portion downward, frontal portion sideways and forward and backside portion backward. Pulling should not be harsh and should not be lull either. It should be modest and such that you feel the stretching.



Figure 3.18

Repeat each exercise of pulling 3 to 5 times. Then rub the palms on each other and place them to cover the ears. Move the palms slowly on the ears to do a soothing massage. (Figure 3.18.)



Figure 3.18

3.2.19 For Forehead: Keep the fingers of both the hands on the forehead. With mild pressure, move them slightly towards the ears. Then bring back. Then, gently press the temples by the thumbs and beneath the eyebrows by fingers. Repeat the entire exercise 5 to 7 times. Do a gentle massaging of the upper part of the ears by the thumbs and the neck by both the hands. (Figure 3.19.)

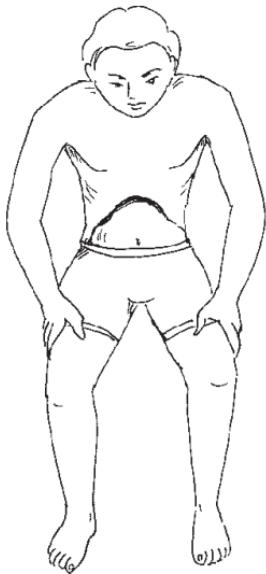


Figure 3.19

3.2.20 For Stomach: Stand up with straight back. Keep the legs separated up to a width of about 7 to 10 inches. Inhale slowly and deeply. While exhaling at the same pace, bend downwards slightly. Hold the breath out now. Bend the legs slightly on the knees and put the hands on the knees. (Your body is in a chair like posture now!). Pull your stomach inward then bulge it outward (repeat several times if you can without breathing). Now inhale slowly and stand in normal posture. Breathe normally for a minute. Then again repeat the exercise. This whole cycle should be repeated 3 to 5 times. But do it without straining any part of your body and without any uneasiness while holding the breath out. (Figure 3.20.)

Note: If one has problem in sitting down, the exercises numbered 3.2.7 to 3.2.20 above may also be done while standing with straight back and neck. Read the precautions carefully. Those having any health problems — including blood pressure, colitis, ulcer, pain of any kind, etc should do only selected exercises as recommended and taught by an experienced doctor or *yoga*-teacher. In general, it is advisable to relax for few minutes after completing each set of exercises.

The word “*yogāsana*” (or *āsana* in brief) refers to a posture in which one feels relaxed while keeping the body active internally. The *rishis* (Vedic sages) had keenly observed the sitting and standing postures of different animals, which, in spite of limited faculties, have wonderful physical capabilities that man is deprived of. They had studied the effects of different postures in the laboratory of their own body and developed specific *āsanas* which had rejuvenating effects on the entire body-mind-soul system.

In this Chapter, we highlight the main *asans* (*āsanas*) of Pragya Yoga. Adept practice of these everyday would help controlled movements for strengthening the nerves, muscles and different organs and regularizing the blood supply in all parts of the body. Not only that, the chanting of the segments of the supreme Vedic Mantra – the Gayatri Mantra, in specific sequel as directed here, with deep breathing would induce soothing effects in the mind as well.

4.1 General Guidelines:

The beginners should first try to master each of the listed *asans* one by one separately. Then attempt completing some of them in the desired sequence. Having mastered over the subsequences, one may try the complete sequence of the sixteen *asans* as described in the following section. Initially it may take extra time but with gradual practice one will be tuned up and complete round of these *asans* will be over only in about ten minutes.

4.2 The Sequence of Asans:

Stand erect. Half-close the eyes and meditating on the brilliance of Lord *Savita* (power source of rising sun) for a moment chant '*Om*'. Having the faith and inner feeling that the spiritual power of *Savita* is rejuvenating the body, mind and soul, follow – with each syllable of Gayatri mantra – the sequence of exercises given underneath. All chantings should be made with deep mental engrossment and steady and deep breathing (inhalation or exhalation, as indicated).

1. **Tadasan:** Stand on the toes. Chant '**Bhūh**' (*bhooh*) and raise both the hands upward while inhaling gradually and deeply. Look upwards to the sky. (All the four actions should take place simultaneously). Hold your breath inside. This exercise helps adequate blood supply in the heart, stretching the spine backwards and thus giving it the much-needed rest. This practice instantly removes lethargy. It is also beneficial in the case of weakness of the heart and blood disorders. (See Fig. 4.1 for posture.)



Figure 4.1

2. **Pad Hastasana:** Chanting '**Bhuvah**', bring both the hands downward from the posture of *tadasan* and exhale at the same slow and consistent pace and bow the head down to touch the knees, also attempt making the palms touch the floor. Hold your breath out for several seconds and come back to the normal standing posture. Practice of this *asana* removes gastric trouble and induces vital strength in the *Idā*, *Pingalā*, and *Suṣumnā Nādīs*. (See the Chapter 5 for introduction to the term *nādī*). It also helps reducing fat on

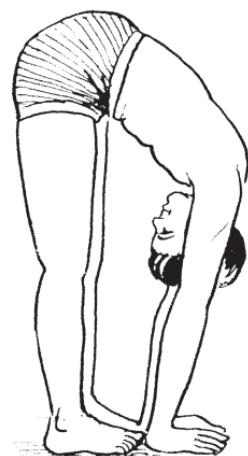


Figure 4.2

the tummy and increasing the flexibility of the spinal cord. (See Fig. 4.2 for posture.)

3. **Vajrasan:** With the chant of '*Swah*', place the toes completely on the floor and set the haunches on the feet. Both the legs should be in closed contact. Keep the backbone erect and place the palms on the knees. Breathe normally during this posture. The back, neck and head should remain straight. Practising this *asan* for few minutes every day is helpful in maintaining good digestion and curing gastric trouble and constipation. It strengthens the muscles around stomach and protects from the problems of hernia. Blood supply to the stomach and uterus is fine-tuned by this practice. (See Fig. 4.3 for posture.)



Figure 4.3



Figure 4.4

4. **Ushtrasan:** Now get up slightly from the *vajrasan* with a chant of '*Tat*'. Stand on your knees with the toes touching the floor and the heels facing backwards. Almost simultaneously, bend backwards to place the palms on the heels from the backside. Inhale deeply while looking upwards. This will inflate your chest. Hold the breath in for few seconds. This *asana* stretches the abdomen, stomach, chest, and hands in a balanced way. Practice of this *asana* helps healing the problems of backache.

and bending of waist/lumber bones etc. It makes the heart strong and augments the natural elasticity of the spinal column. This also provides exercise to muscles of the genital organs. It is a pre-requisite for higher level yoga practices of activating the *Ida*, *Pingla* and *Sushumna*. (See Fig. 4.4 for posture.)

5. ***Yogamudra***: (Remember, the breath was hold inside during the *ushtrasan!*). With the chanting of '***Savituh***', exhale slowly and sit on your legs as in *vajrasana* at the same time, clench together both the palms at the back and stretch upwardly and place the head on the floor so that the chest and the stomach touch the thighs. Hold the breath out for few seconds This posture further helps curing severe gastric troubles, setting the metabolic activities right and increasing the appetite. It is recommended in advanced yoga practices of awakening the extrasensory energy nucleus called *manipūrita chakra* beneath the naval. (See Fig. 4.5 for posture.)

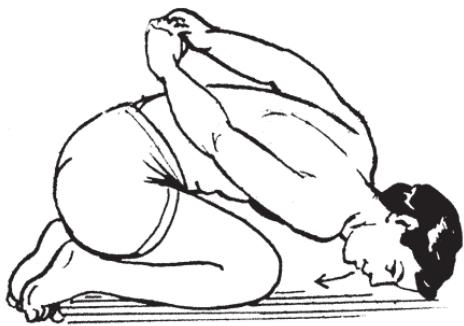


Figure 4.5

6. ***Ardh Tadasan***: Chanting '***Varenyam***', inhale deeply. Being seated in the posture of *vajrasan*, raise both the arms and eyes upwards. Hold the breath inside and stretch the arms as much as you can without pain. Focus your eyes on the hands. This *asan* gives a natural and mild traction to the neck and allays the problems, if any, like cervical spondylitis.

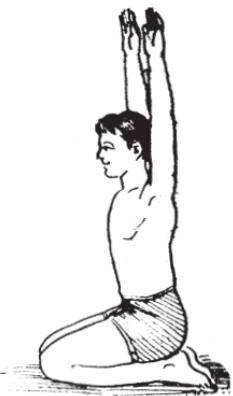


Figure 4.6

Likewise *tadasan*, it increases blood supply to the heart and cures weakness of the heart and blood-flow related disorders. (See Fig. 4.6 for posture.)

7. *Shashankasan*: Chanting '*Bhargo*', exhale at the same pace as inhalation in the preceding *asan*. Simultaneously, sit in the posture of *vajrasan* and keep both the arms stretched outwardly in front of the chest. Place the palms on the floor, bend from the waist to make the stomach touch the thighs and the head touch the floor. The arms should remain straight with palms touching the floor. Hold the breath outside for few seconds. This *asan* eliminates the problem of constipation and soothingly stretches the muscles within and between the anus and buttock regions. It relaxes the sitica nerves and also helps in regularizing the secretions from the adrenal gland. (See Fig. 4.7 for posture.)



Figure 4.7

8. *Bhujangasan*: Chanting '*Devasya*' inhale deeply and pull your waist upwards. Toes and palm should remain at the same place where these were in the previous posture but now the arms should stand straighten. The knees and thighs should touch the floor. Draw your chest and head upwards and

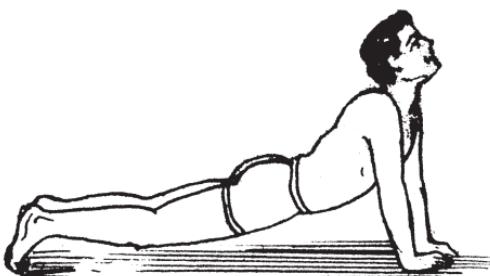


Figure 4.8

raise the head like a snake's hood. Hold the breath inside and bend the head backwards slightly to stare the sky. This exercise is also recommended as a remedy against cervical spondylitis and several other problems of the spine or back. Apart from providing soothing exercise to the lungs, heart and the backbone, it is especially beneficial for healthy functioning of the liver and kidneys. (See Fig. 4.8 for posture.)

9. **Tiryak Bhujangasan** (left): In the posture of *bhujangasan*, exhale slowly. Now inhale and with the chant of '**Dhīmahi**' (*dheemahi*) turn the neck towards the left and try looking at the heel of right foot. Then hold the breath for few seconds. With exhalation bring the head in the front.
10. **Tiryak Bhujangasan** (right): Chant '**Dhiyo**', inhale and turn the neck towards the right to see the heel of the left foot. Hold the breath for few seconds and bring the head again in the front with exhalation. Practice of the *tiryak bhujangasan* enhances flexibility of the waist and augments the benefits of the *bhujangasan*.
11. **Shashankasan**: Chanting '**Yonah**' return to the posture of step 7.
12. **Ardh Tadasan**: Chanting ***Prachodayāt*** (*prachodayaat*) repeat step 6.
13. **Utkatasan**: After *ardha tadasan* in step 12, exhale slowly. Now chant '**Bhūḥ**' and with normal breathing sit on the toes. The heels should not touch the floor. Let the calves touch the thighs and knees touch the buttocks. Place both the palms on the knees. Bend the arms on elbows and keep the hands in front of the chest with palms placed on each other in the posture of *Namaskar*. Back, neck and head should be

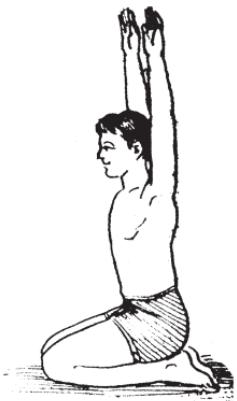


Figure 4.9

erect. Breathing should be deep and continued at a consistent pace. This *asan* gives strength to the calves and improves balance of the body. (See Fig. 4.9 for posture.)

14. ***Padhastasan:*** Chanting '***Bhuvaḥ***' repeat step 2.
15. ***Tadasan:*** Chanting '***Swah***' repeat step 1.
16. **Coming back to original position:** With a deep chant of '*Om*', inhale slowly and deeply, and stand straight with stretched chest. Place the arms upwards and bend the elbows above the shoulders in a posture as though you are holding a heavy rock on the hands. Hold the breath for few seconds with a feeling that your arms, shoulders, chest and whole body are empowered by new vital force. Now close the fists. Exhale slowly, bring the arms on the sides and stand straight in the posture of attention. Breathe normal in a relaxed mood.

These sixteen steps complete one round of the *Pragya Yoga asans*. With gradual progress, one may complete 3 to 5 rounds every day. The breathing patterns and chanting of Gayatri Mantra also get perfected with sincerity in daily practice. To a great extent these also offer the benefits of *prāṇāyāmas*. However, if one has time and will or is advised by the yoga teacher to do so, the practice of *prāṇāyāmas* recommended in the following Chapter would render great benefits.

If one continues to practise the above *āsanas* aptly and is also sincere in doing *prāṇāyāmas* and Gayatri Meditation every day at suitable timings (preferably early morning), he would get the physical, mental and spiritual benefits of Ashtang Yoga.



Prāṇāyāmas Prescribed in Pragya Yoga

I 5

The Vedic sages (*rishis*) have rewarded us with invaluable knowledge for our well-being and mental and spiritual evolution. The *yoga* science of *prāṇāyāma* is unique of such precious gifts, which offers enormous benefits to our physical as well as subtle bodies by enhancing our *prāṇa* (vital spiritual energy).

Elevated *prāṇa* enables an otherwise ordinary being carry out extraordinary deeds. A unique feature of all great beings is their above-normal level of *prāṇa*. In normal course, the vital energy we consume via breathing fresh air is just sufficient for sustenance of our physical body. If that is obstructed for few minutes one feels suffocated and may suffer unconsciousness, coma or even death if the blockage continues longer. As a ‘physical exercise’, *prāṇāyāma* is a practice of deep and harmonized breathing. Several kinds of *prāṇāyāmas* – including those with meditation and specific kinds of mantra chanting are described in the *yoga* literature.

Two broad categories of *prāṇāyāmas* are – (i) *antarang vyāyāma paraka*: dealing with deep breathing; as the name suggests, these help inner cleansing and introvert concentration of mind along with raising the level of *prāṇa*; (ii) *upāsana paraka*: rhythm of the breath is also important here. This category is named so because the *prāṇāyāmas* in this class help inner purification as well as tuning of inner emotions and are also useful for seekers of spiritual *sādhanās*.

Duration, mechanism and rhythm of *pūrak* (inhalation), *antah-kumbhak* (holding the breath inside), *rechak* (exhalation) and *bāhya-kumbhak* (holding the breath outside) are specific for specific types of *prāṇāyāma*. Apart from these, some meditative practices are also associated with certain (esp. *upāsana paraka*) *prāṇāyāmas*.

In general the *antarang vyāyāma paraka prāṇāyāmas* focus only on the first three phases – *pūrak*, *antah-kumbhak*, and *rechak*. The durations of time for these should be in the ratio of 1:2:1; i.e. the duration of holding the breath inside should be double of that of inhalation and the time taken for exhalation should be the same as that of inhalation. For more experienced practitioners this ratio is raised to 1:4:2.

The *upāsnā paraka prāṇāyāmas* are more like devotional practices than exercises. After succeeding in the initial practice of these *prāṇāyāmas*, the *sādhaka* is usually advised to mediate or practise a meditative state of mind while doing the breathing exercise associated with such a *prāṇāyāma*. The duration of time for *pūrak*, *antah-kumbhak*, *rechak* and *bāhya-kumbhak* in these *prāṇāyāmas* should be generally controlled to remain in the ratio of 2:1:2:1. In other words, the time and pace and duration of inhalation and exhalation should be the same and the time of holding the breath (in or out) should be half of the former.

Both the kinds — *antarang vyāyāma paraka* and *upāsanā paraka* are useful. Likewise for the physical exercise or *yoga-āsanas*, one should not eat anything at least three hours before doing a *prāṇāyāma* and at least half an hour after. One should relax for a while to let the breathing get pace normalize between two successive *prāṇāyāmas*. If one wants to practise some *prāṇāyāmas* of each category, there should be a gap of at least half an hour between them. Usually it is advised that one type

(preferably, *upāsanā paraka*) of *prāṇāyāmas* is practised in the morning and the other (*antarang vyāyāma paraka*) in the evening.

The yoga-science of *prāṇāyāma* or the science of breathing as it is often called describes ten *nādis* (neuronal channels) of the flow of *prāṇa*. The discipline of yoga-science pertaining to these aspects is known as *Swar Yoga* or *Swar Vigyan*^[5, 6]. *Idā*, *Pinglā* and *Suṣumnā* are most prominent among the *nādis* referred in *Swar Vigyan*. These are also called the lunar (*chandra nādi*), solar (*surya nādi*) and absolute currents of *prāṇa*.

Except for few moments throughout the day we naturally breathe only through one nostril. Natural breathing through the left nostril is linked with activation of the *Idā*, which has cooling (calming) effect on the mind body system. This pattern of breathing is called *chandra swar*. The *surya swar* – natural breathing through the right nostril – is linked with activation of the *Pinglā*, which has warming (stimulating) effect on the mind body system. Very rarely we naturally breathe through both the nostrils. At this time the *prāṇa* flows through the *Suṣumnā*. Such moments occur at the time of reversal of respiration from left to right or vice versa. Each type of *swara* has its positive or negative effect depending upon the state and activity of the mind and body. (See the books listed in reference nos. [5] and [6] for details). Different kinds of *prāṇāyāmas* aim at controlling one or the other of the *swaras* or their rhythm or intensity, or balancing the two *swaras*. Certain higher-level *prāṇāyāmas* also aim at the absolute flow of *prāṇa* through the *Suṣumnā*.

The *prāṇāyāmas* recommended in Pragya Yoga are *upāsanā parak*. These are effective in enhancing vitality and alertness. These also help purify the *nādīs* and harmonize the *swaras* and thus help maintain mental calm and concentration. These are elementary, as compared to other difficult practices of

prāṇāyāmas and *yoga-kriyās* and can be practised without difficulty by people of all age groups.

These should be practised in the sequence described below. *Siddhasana* is regarded best for practising *prāṇāyāmas*. However, as per once convenience, one may sit in *sukhasana* (cross-legged), or sit or stand in any posture with erect spine, head and neck. The idea in the following sequence of *prāṇāyāmas* necessary in Pragya Yoga is to first tune up the rhythm of breathing, then attract and absorb *prāṇa* and finally let it be distributed for internal cleansing, balancing the *swars* and energizing healthy activities in the mind-body system.

(1) Watch and Set the Rhythm of Breathing: Relax your mind and body and observe your natural and spontaneous breathing. You will feel that it becomes more rhythmic, steady and deep, as your mind frees itself of other thoughts and gets more focused on the breath. Now try to control your breathing pattern so that the time taken for inhalation and exhalation is almost the same. Try to hold the breath inside for some time after inhalation. This duration should be almost half that of inhalation. After exhalation, hold the breath outside (i.e. do not inhale) for almost the same time as for holding it in. In other words, in this process you harmonize the time taken for of *pūrak*, *antah kumbhak*, *rechak* and *bāhya kumbhak* in the ratio of 2:1:2:1.

Once your breath is fine-tuned this way, close your eyes and imagine that the vital force of *prāṇa* is internally penetrating every component of the body and eliminating all the dirt, untoward accumulations and infirmities there. (This meditative practice of *prāṇāyāma* can also be applied to focus at specific part or organ of the body which is diseased or injured, in order to allay its pain and heal it).

(2) ***Prāṇākarṣaṇa Prāṇāyāma:*** Sit in a meditative posture in *sukhasana* (or in any other sitting posture with straight back and head; keep your eyes closed). Place your hands in the lap (with right palm above the left) or on the knees. Your breath should have already stabilized and fine-tuned by practice (1) above. Now, meditate upon the soothing glow of *prāṇa* with a feeling that your being, everything around, and the entire world is immersed in an unbounded ocean of *prāṇa*. Imagine as though, upon your invocation, the currents of *prāṇa* are getting denser, bigger and brighter (having a glow of rising sun) around you.

Now take a deep breath and try to feel that the currents of *prāṇa* are penetrating your body and getting absorbed inside. While holding the breath inside, feel that every cell, every particle of your existence is being purified and energized. With exhaled air, all the impurities, hazardous elements and dullness is being thrown out forever. By holding the breath out, you ensure that the expelled untoward effects are cleansed out from the surroundings too and again you have fresh currents of *prāṇa* to inhale. Your breaths should be deep, slow and quiver-free. Their rhythm and pace should be as set in the step (1) above. With little practice and determination, you would be able to perfect this *prāṇāyāma*. Practise it for 15 to 30 minutes every day. Gradually your vital and spiritual energy levels will rise and help strengthen and illumine your personality and inner self. Sincere practice of this *prāṇāyāma* endows the devout *sādhakas* with divine potentials.

(3) ***Nāḍī Śodhana Prāṇāyāma:*** Sit in the posture as for above-mentioned *prāṇāyāmas*. Breathe only through the left nostril. The rhythm and pace of inhalation, retaining the breath internally, exhalation, and retaining it out should also be the same (in the ratio of 2:1:2:1). Breathing should also be deep, slow and consistent. The only difference from what

you practised in (1) above is that you are now breathing only through the left nostril. After three complete respirations, repeat the cycle in the same manner by breathing through only the right nostril three times. After this, the next three breaths should be inhaled through both the nostrils and exhaled through the mouth.

This way, in nine consecutive breaths (first three through the left nostril, next three through the right and last three inhaled through both and exhaled through the mouth) make one round of *nādī śodhana prāṇāyāma*. On an average three such rounds should be completed. Meditative feeling should be in tune with the nature of the respective *swaras*. Attempt to feel that after inhalation through the left nostril, the *idā nādī* gets stimulated and induces a cooling effect (imagining the glow of moonlight during *antah kumbhak* would increase this soothing feel); with exhalation, all the existing heat (of unnecessary excitations, anger and jealous etc) is uprooted and is thrown out during *bāhya kumbhak*. For the second phase, the meditative perception/ imagination should correspond to that of activation of *pinglā nādī* – feel of energetic flow during inhalation, which rejuvenates vital capacities of the bio-energy centers during *antah kumbhak*. Imagination on rising sun's glow in this state augments this feeling of illumination and boosting. The darkness and dullness assimilated inside is eliminated during exhalation and the energy stimulated inside is let absorbed – during *bāhya kumbhak* – for creative potentials. In the final phase, inhalation through both the nostrils is to balance the lunar and solar impulses to softly vibrate the *suṣumnā nādī*; a feeling of peace during *antah kumbhak* and that of removing all negativity by exhalation through mouth is necessary for best effects. *Bāhya kumbhak* of this phase should be accompanied by a calm feeling of liberation.

Thorough practice of this *prāṇāyāma* is a prerequisite for all higher-level *yoga* (including *kūṇḍalinī*) and spiritual endeavors.

Desired Disciplines and Precautions

I 6

likewise the physical training (P.T.) in the schools, the exercises of Pragya Yoga can be taught and practised in groups taking care that all the participants are comparable in carrying out the exercise and that substantial free space is left around every one. Irrespective of whether one practices these in a group or alone, one should follow certain disciplines that are essential for all kinds of yoga and other physical exercises. These include — observing the guidelines of *āhāra* and *vihāra* as cited earlier; keeping a gap of at least three hours between eating and doing exercise; not drinking anything since at least an hour before starting a physical exercise; wearing comfortably loose and light clothing, as tight dresses would block blood supply and/or cause excessive pressure on certain parts of the body.

One should relax for some time (say 15-20 minutes) after doing physical exercises. In any case, nothing should be eaten or drank for at least half-an hour after completing the exercises. After half-an hour one may take milk or some fruits.

Do not eat spicy or oily food. Eating lavish food counters nourishing. Often people tend to overeat or consume junk food because of the greed of tongue. Restrain from it if you want to enjoy healthy and hearty life. Avoid using any intoxicating substance or stimulating agent; even tea and coffee are harmful so restrain drinking these.

Use of slightly coarse barley or wheat flour is supposed to be easy to digest. Rice grains separated from the chaff by hand-crushing is also found better in food value and digestive ease as

compared to machine-crushed and polished rice commonly used these days.

Good sleep is also essential for healthy body and relaxed mind. Six to seven hours of sound sleep are recommended for adults. Those having problems in good sleep may practise *shavasana* after going to bed. Practice of *yoganidra* as part of the *yoga* exercises would bring excellent effect on soothing and rejuvenating the mind.

Physical exercises should ideally be done in open space pervaded with fresh air. If that is not possible, a verandah, balcony or room in the house may be chosen but it should be clean, airy and should be made spacious enough for easy movements of legs and hands in different postures. Silent ambience around is also essential for due concentration in carrying out the exercises systematically. The best timings are early morning soon after getting up and freshening.

Those aspiring for best effects of *yoga* should develop a habit of sleeping by 10 pm and getting up by 4 or 4:30 am. Observance of physical and mental chastity (*Brahmcharya*) is also required for preserving and elevating the levels of *prāṇa* (vital spiritual energy). Easiest way to prevent negative and untoward thinking is adoption of the principal “keep yourself busy and smiling”. Doing creative activities, helping others and pursuing *swādhyāya* and *satsang*¹ are best means for conditioning the mind for all kinds of (*yoga*) *sādhanās*.

6.1 Precautions: For all physical exercises including *yoga āsanas* and *prāṇāyams* and other *yoga-kriyās* should be practised by sitting, standing or lying down (as per the requirement of the specific posture) on a folded blanket or cloth of natural fibre to ensure maximum conduction of energy within the body and prevention of its absorption by the earth.

It should also be noted that an exercise should be practised only if one is able to do it without putting excessive pressure and devoid of any pain or unusual sensation in any part of the body. There should also be balance of forward, backward and sideways bending. Usually, pregnant women, people who have undergone some surgery or are suffering from some injury or physical ailments are restrained from doing specific exercises. They should not attempt physical exercises without consulting the doctor. In general, for every one it is advisable that *yoga* exercises should be learnt under the supervision of an experienced teacher.



Drink Water, Be Healthy



Water therapy has been known in India since ages. The ancient Indian text and traditions describe it as “*uṣāpāna*” (meaning: drinking water in the early hours before sunrise). It used to be an integral part of people’s daily routine. It continues to be so in the villages and among the people who know and adopt to live in consonance with Nature’s disciplines. Unfortunately, in the blind imitation of western culture and hypnosis of comfort driven artificial life style, most people in urban and semi-urban India have forgotten this simple yet remarkably beneficial key to healthy life.

Uṣapāna: It is most effective to drink water empty stomach early in the morning. If you get up late due to work in the night or some other constraints, you may do whenever you get up. For best effects, drink water soon after leaving the bed and attending to nature’s call of urination, etc. May have one gargle to clean the fluids in the mouth if any, but do not brush your teeth before drinking water. Sit and drink water slowly; drink as much water as you can, till your tummy is stretched. In normal case it is advised that an adult having body-weight about 60kg should drink at least 1 kg (= about 1000 cc) water in one sitting. Those weighing few kilograms more should drink about 1.25 kg and so on.

Initially you may find it difficult to drink that much water. But don’t worry! Try to drink only as much as you can without any difficulty. With regular practice your capacity will gradually increase in few days. Needless to say that the water should be of drinking quality and be kept in a clean utensil. There will be added advantage if the water is stored overnight or for several hours in an utensil made up of copper.

Most beneficial sitting posture (esp. for those suffering from acidity or constipation) during this practice is supposed to be *ukadū* position: sit with only the sole of feet touching the floor, there should be minimum possible gap between the legs and these should be folded such that the knees face upwards; hips would point downwards but should not touch the floor. (See Figure 7.1: “*Ukadū*” posture). However, any comfortable sitting posture is also good provided the back is kept straight and there is no pressure on the tummy.

Please Note:

1. One should not eat or drink anything for at least 45 minutes after *uṣāpāna*.
2. If one feels cold or has throat-pain, fever or weakness, then one should not drink cold water. Lukewarm or slightly less or more warm water will be better.
3. If one feels warm or has some burning sensation (in the stomach or chest for example,) then one should preferably drink the water at its normal temperature (as stored overnight).
4. For the beginners, the quantity or frequency of urination might increase after starting the practice of *uṣāpāna*. But it would normalize within 10 to 15 days.
5. Those suffering from arthritis or any other *vat* related problem (e.g. gastro), should repeat this practice of *uṣāpāna* 2 to 3 times a day (e.g. morning, afternoon, night) for good therapeutic effects. Later on, when their ailment has subsidized they may also switch over to the average practice of once a day.
6. It is advisable that one takes a slow stroll (preferably outside in the fresh air of morning) for at least 10 to 15 minutes after *uṣāpāna*. If one has a tendency or problems of gases or acidity, one should roll the hand gently on the stomach in a circular fashion to distribute the consumed water uniformly

(and thus check out the air deposited in the stomach or G.I. tract). To get rid of sever acidity, gastric problems or chronic constipation, one may also practice "*katimardasan*", as guided below.

Katimardanāsana: Lie down straight on the back. Fold the legs so that the knees face upwards and the heels touch the buttocks. Both the legs should touch each other; soles should be touching the floor (carpet or cloth sheet being spread on it to lie down). Spread the arms sideways at 180° to the shoulders. Both the hands and shoulders should be in one straight line and palms facing upwards. Now close the fists. Attempt, as much as can be done without any problem, to tilt both the legs (in folded state) towards the left and the neck towards the right side. (Back and soles should not be lifted above the floor and hand should also not be disturbed). Then attempt to tilt the legs towards the right and the neck towards the left. This completes one round. 25 to 30 such rounds are recommended on an average. The number may be increased as per the yoga-teacher or doctor's guidance.

7.1 Food, Water and Health:

It is well-known that the quality of our food and our eating habits play a crucial role in sustenance of health. But less known is the scientific fact that healthy metabolism¹ is essential for healthy effects of a balanced diet. Apart from selecting proper type and quantity of what one should eat, one should also know the necessary rules of how to eat. Most crucial and beneficial rules are:

- (i) Keep a gap of at least 4 hours in successive rounds of eating (breakfast, lunch etc).
- (ii) Eat little lesser than your hunger and chew it thoroughly.

- (iii) Drink a glass of water sometime before eating. Do not drink while eating. If it is a must, you may take a few (say, 4 to 5) sips of water.
- (iv) Drink adequate amount of water about 1 to 1.5 hours after eating.

7.1.1 Improved Health by *ūṣāpāna*:

Water plays significant role in several vital activities in our body. Water therapy is an important component of naturopathy. Ayurveda, the most ancient science of medicine refers water as nectar for sustenance of vigor and verve. It also prescribes *ūṣāpāna* as an important healing technique against the excess or imbalance of the three *doshas* (*vat*, *pitt*, *kaph*), which it regards as the root cause of most diseases and disorders. This Indian science is still in use and is gaining new recognition worldwide. According to Ayurveda, for desired therapeutic effect of *ūṣāpāna*, the following disciplines of diet should also be observed:

Those suffering from *vat* related ailments should avoid eating hard grains (e.g. black-gram). Should also restrain from eating certain leafy vegetables in rainy season.

In case of excess of *pitt*, stop eating fried food, spices, pickles and sour substances. Also restrain from drinking tea, coffee etc.

In order to minimize the excess of *kaph*, avoid eating fine flour, horse-bean seeds and rice, and vegetables like potato, Colocasia roots (*arbi*), lady's finger (*bhindi*) and bananas.

Ayurveda affirms water as best remedy of indigestion. Its therapeutic principles specify that substantial amount of water should be drunk at appropriate phases of metabolic reactions.

It emphasizes use of adequate water in preparation of food and having juicy and liquid-diet components in meal. But at the same time, it warns against drinking water during or immediately after having food, as doing so disturbs the natural process of digestion; hence the rules (iii) and (iv) listed above for drinking water.

7.2 Healing Benefits:

The technique described as “*uṣāpāna*” in the ancient Indian text and revived as part of Pragya Yoga, is also an integral component of Naturopathy. Japan’s organization for health awareness named “Sickness Association” has thoroughly experimented and verified the positive effects of this water therapy. It has propagated this easy-to-practise technique in a big way. Millions of people across the globe have benefited by this.

Major diseases or health problems for which this is said to give definite remedial effects include the following.

1. *Vāta Dosa* (*vat dosha*) related problems: Headache (without any pathological conditions), high blood pressure, anemia, obesity, arthritis, general joint pain or body-ache, sitica, muscular spasm, drowsiness.
2. *Kafa dosa* (*kaph dosha*) related problems: Cough, chronic cold, asthma, bronchitis, tuberculosis.
3. *Pitta dosa* (*pitt dosha*) related problems: Meningitis, (hyper) acidity, liver-ailments,
4. Problems due to *vat* and *pitt doshas*: Constipation, gastritis, weak digestion.

5. Problems due to *vat* and *kaph doshas*: Nasal, throat and chest ailments of several kinds.
6. Eye-infections or eye-straining or related problems in the eyes due to *kaph* and *pitt doshas*.
7. Problems due to genital infections or related imbalance in the three *doshas*: e.g., irregular menstrual cycle, leucorrhoea, cancer of uterus, etc.
8. Ailments due to disruption in the balance of three *doshas* or due to hereditary or anatomical abnormalities: urine-infections, renal diseases (including nephritis and kidney-malfunction).

In general, the average durations of treatment (by water-therapy with other recommended precautions) of several ailments/diseases are also found quite consistent — about ten days in case of constipation and gastritis; one month in case of high blood glucose; one to two months in case of hypertension or high blood pressure; three months in case of bronchitis or tuberculosis.

7.3 Scientific Justification:

The stomach, likewise the other organs of the body are physically dull during the 6-7 hours of sleep. However, all the physiological and biochemical activities continue as per the normal biological clock. In particular, the metabolic activities that take place during this period digest the food intake. The vital chemicals thus produced are also distributed in different parts of the body through blood flow during this phase. Discarding of dead cells and nurturing of the new ones is also a part of metabolism. As we don't drink water during the long stretch of sleeping time, some of the rejected elements, dead cells and other rubbish

inside the body that are harmful to it do not get drained out completely.

Drinking of water immediately after getting up, that too in adequate amount to fill the empty stomach helps its excess supply necessary to flush out the harmful substances remaining in the body. Thus *ūṣāpāna* processes natural and timely cleansing inside the body every day. In fact not only the digestive problems, but also a wide variety of other disorders and ailments — including bladder or kidney stones, abscess and even tumors — are caused by these harmful deposits in different organs and canals of the body. Continuing the practice of *ūṣāpāna* regularly even in the apparently healthy state is therefore necessary as a preventive measure.

7.3.1 Why drink without brushing the teeth?

Saliva produced during the night also contains certain kinds of unhealthy substances. A layer of these remains coated on the teeth and the tongue even when we spit and gargle after getting up. Drinking large amounts of water in this state takes these substances inside in a very diluted form. The small quantities of the antigens (the toxic or pathogenic elements) thus consumed act like vaccines and help the body learn to produce antibodies to counter their toxic/hazardous effect in future too.

This way *ūṣāpāna* before brushing the teeth is also good for naturally enhancing the efficiency of defense machinery (the immune system) of the body.

Most importantly, this is the only therapy as well as preventive measure which is almost free of cost. The rich and the poor, the old and the young, all can benefit from this simple and wonderful practice of *ūṣāpāna*.

Health-Awareness Movement for Benefit of the Masses



Healthy people are an asset of a nation. No amount of health or other resources can make us strong and progressive if we are sick or weak. Healthcare should therefore be a priority of all those who can reason. It is the responsibility the wise to be physically, mentally and spiritually fit and make others around them aware of the importance of disciplined life-style and balanced exercises of the mind-body system. In view of its enormous benefits, dissemination of knowledge of yoga and training of its practices would be a commendable effort for social welfare.

Those associated with the Yug Nirman Mission of the Gayatri Pariwar should practise Pragya Yoga and also teach others. The mission's fraternity at Shantikunj, Haridwar offers practical training² to every one on Pragya Yoga free-of-cost. On an average one can easily learn it in a week's time. Regional and other nodal centers (Chetna Kendras, Shakti Peethas and Pragya Mandals) of Gayatri Pariwar should also begin training courses of similar kind for the benefit of more and more people in their states/towns and villages. Awareness for healthcare by Pragya Yoga should be mobilized as a mass movement. People of all age-groups can participate in the Pragya Yoga training camps irrespective of their socio-economic status and lineages.

For better attention of the teachers the training sessions may be scheduled batch wise at different time-slots or in different weeks. These batches should be manageable in size and should be homogenous in terms of age and general physique of the participants. For example, there could be separate batches for children, men and women. For the adults there may be further grouping according as youth and senior citizens. Review of participants' medical history and his/her current health status

should be discussed with experienced medical expert to chalk out specific instructions/precautions for those having some complaints.

People can learn, adopt and also make their family members practise Pragya Yoga. Their punctuality and consequent benefits will inspire their neighbors as well. This is how a good message will be spread and will work for better health for everyone.

In order to generate people's interest and participation, collective physical exercises like drill or P.T. in schools or in scout camps etc, and suitable sports may also be organized every day or once a week or so. There are many Indian sports, which are excellent means of augmenting the physical strength and providing joyful entertainment to all participants; moreover most of these do not require any instruments, fancy arrangements or other expenses. It is certainly not necessary to organize big tournaments, advertisements or pompous award ceremonies to propagate health awareness. Playing together with the neighbors next door and with others across the colony will do this more effectively.

The fitness camps cum sports should be coupled with advice on best nutritional habits. As part of Pragya Yoga campaign, it is suggested that people eat sprouted grains and pulses. Small quantity of these eaten (with proper chewing) raw or steamed fulfills major requirement of proteins, minerals and vitamins.

Mobilizing health awareness and training programs of the masses is a must today when it is hard to find anyone in perfect physical and mental health. In view of its simple yet comprehensive and effective approach, Pragya Yoga assumes greater relevance and significance.

The health awareness programme of Pragya Yoga may also be linked with collective efforts of keeping the surroundings, the colony and the village/town clean and educating the illiterates and the under-privileged ones. It would thus become a promising welfare movement at the grass-root level in consonance with the farsighted mission of *Yug Nirman* (creation of a new era of enlightened sensitivity and thoughts and righteous progress).

References/Additional Reading:

- [1] Health Tips from the Vedas. (Compilation and Translation of Hindi articles published in "Akhand Jyoti"; Edited by Dr. P. Pandya and Shambhu Dass). Publ. Wedmata Gayatri Trust Shantikunj, Hardwar, 2007. ISBN: 81-8255-021-1.
- [2] AyuSoft – A Comprehensive Software for Deriving Radical Ayurvedic Solutions for Health and Treatment Advice (developed by Dr. M. Dhurandhar et al, C-DaC Pune), 2006. For details see www.cdac.in (Products and Services). Contact email: ayusoft-support@cdac.in
- [3] *Asana Pranayam Se Adhi Vyadhi Nivarna* (by Brahmvarcas), Yug Nirman Yojna, Mathura, UP, India. 7th Print. 2006
- [4] Asana Pranayama Mudra Bandha (by Swami Satyananda Saraswati) Yoga Publication Trust, Munger, Bihar, India. 3rd ed. 1996.
- [5] *Swar Yoga Se Divya Gyan* (by Pt. Shriram Sharma Acharya), Yug Nirman Yojna, Mathura, UP, India. 6th Print. 2001.
- [6] Diagnose, Cure and Empower Yourself by the Currents of Breath (English Translation of [5] above). Publishers, Shri Wedmata Gayatri Trust, Shantikunj, Hardwar, India. 1st ed. 2006. ISBN: 81-8255-011-4.



APPENDIX

The courses offered free-of-cost at Shantikunj, Hardwar include the following (Pragya Yoga practical session is an integral part of most of these courses):

- (i) Nine-days Gayatri *anuṣṭhāna* and spiritual initiation courses (*Sanjeevini Sadhana Shivirs*) scheduled from 1st to 9th, 11th to 19th and 21st to 29th every month;
- (ii) One-month training programme (*Yug Shilpi Satras*) running from the 1st to 30th of every month for training talented, self-employed volunteers for social and cultural reconstruction and rural development. This includes workshops on rural-technology, small-scale industries and self-employment training.
- (iii) *Parivrajak Satras* (of 3 months durations) for dedicated volunteers for dissemination of the Indian Cultural values. It includes teaching the philosophy, scientific basis and methods of conducting *shodas sankaras* and *yagya*.
- (iv) Short term specialized courses for psycho-spiritual upliftment of teachers, bureaucrats, technocrats and other professionals;
- (v) Five-days higher level spiritual *sādhanā* course for inner enlightenment. (*Antah Urja Jagaran Satra*).

Contact : Postal: Manager, Shantikunj, Hardiwar: 249 411, India. Ph: 91-1334-260602 / 260309.

Fax: 91-1334-261886 Mail: shantikunj@awgp.org

Website: www.awgp.org

Course offered by sister organizations:

- Self-reliant education and self-employment training course (of duration 3 months to one year) at Gayatri Tapobhumi, Mathura. (No fee is charged here).

Contact: Postal: Manager, Gayatri Tapobhumi, Mathura: 281003, (U.P.), India. Ph: 91-565-2530128 / 2530399

- Diploma and Degree Course offered at The Dev Sanskriti Vishwa Vidyalay, Haridwar:

Recognized by the Uttarakhand Govt. and the UGC of India in 2002, this autonomous, self-funded university offers several undergraduate and postgraduate levels degree courses in Clinical Psychology, Yogic Science and Human Excellence, Indian Culture and Tourism, Value-based Journalism and Mass Communication, Applied Yoga Consciousness & Holistic Health. Excellent opportunities for self-learning and original research are available here in the above areas and also in Vedic Sciences, Indology and Oriental Studies.

To help wider sections of the society – especially the elderly people and those who may not have time to complete degree courses, the university offers some diploma level and certificate courses in — Yoga and human consciousness, Holistic Health Management, Theology, and Rural Management.

Admissions to all programs are based on qualifying entrance tests. (No education fee is charged, the students only pay a nominal amount for their food and hostel maintenance). Students get an opportunity to live in a larger family like ambience on the beautiful campus of the university surrounded by serene Himalayan beauty. Their schedule and method of teaching is designed to lay emphasis on cultivation of sensitivity and positive & altruistic attitudes, and self-analysis and self-learning.

Contact:

Registrar, Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalay,
Gayatrikunj, Rishikesh Road, Haridwar:249411, India.
Ph: 91-1334-262049 Email: registrar@dsvv.org
Website: www.dsvv.org

(Footnotes)

- 1 It should be remembered that health and stamina of the body are not gained because of excess or lavishness of food. In fact, only the properly digested food that get transformed into vital elements (metabolites, minerals, juices and chemicals and blood) nurtures and strengthens the body. Major cause of the sickness and weakness of billions of people today is their excessive eating. The undigested or poorly digested food is no less harmful to the body than toxins or viruses. Note and follow the simple formula for healthy and hearty life — reduce your eating to half and increase you water-intake to double, physical exercise to triple and cheerful laughter to quadruple times its present level. — (cited from the teachings of Pandit Shriram Sharma Acharya).
- 2 See Appendix for list of courses of interest and importance.

